

REPORTS and CORRESPONDENCE

News Notes from the West

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February 13–15: — The Western Regional Conference of the Union of Radical Political Economists (URPE) held a conference at UC Berkeley which was of considerable interest to historians. One theme of the conference concerned contemporary attacks on feminism from the New Right, set in a historical setting, with papers from Johanna Brenner and David Plotke. Another theme focused on U.S. militarism; and a third, but minor one, dealt with political economy and working class culture in the nineteenth century.

March 21–22: — A conference on Women's Culture in American Society, 1880-1980, was held at the Women's Building, in downtown Los Angeles, hosted by Elizabeth Weisz-Buck, of the Department of History at U.C.L.A. This was more of a formal academic history meeting, with themes such as female heroes and feminist communities, female labor force participation, and the sex-gender system seen in historical perspective. Many excellent papers were given and discussed, among them offerings by Katherine Kish Sklar on "The Resources and Achievements of Women in the Social Settlement Movement, 1890-1920"; by Suellen Cheng on "Life Experiences and Acculturation Among Chinese-American Women in California, 1880-1930"; by Dian Degnan on "Telephone Operators: Scientific Management and Women Workers, 1900-1925"; and by Blanche Wiesen Cook, which had the intriguing title "The Historical Denial of Lesbianism: From Sappho to Eleanor Roosevelt."

May 1–2: — The sixth annual conference of the Southwest Labor Studies Association was held at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. A report on this conference, now a well-established annual event, and probably the most broadly based of all western labor history events, is not yet available. It is worth noting, though, that the S.W.L.S.C. has now acquired a formal journal of its own, entitled *Southwest Economy and Society*. Formerly edited at Albuquerque and dealing mainly with the cultural life and work experiences of native-

Americans, Mexican-Americans, and local history relevant to the surrounding area, the journal will retain much of the same focus, whilst broadening its areas of interest somewhat. The new editor is Norma Pratt, 395 East Palm, Altadena, Calif. 91001.

Interest in labor history in northern California received a fillip as the result of a day-long symposium hosted by David Brody at the Institute for Industrial Relations on the UC Berkeley campus on May 23. Sponsored by the state-wide University of California administration as a way of developing contacts between faculty and graduate students working in particular disciplines, the symposium was attended by representatives of both groups from UCLA, Berkeley, and the campuses at Riverside, Santa Barbara, and Davis. Core ideas from graduate students at various stages of work on their dissertations were discussed, on a wide range of topics. It is hoped that a second such session will be held at UCLA next spring, hosted by John Laslett. The Bay Area Labor History Workshop, with about thirty members, also meets regularly. In recent months it has held sessions on "Labor Theater during the Great Depression," "The Use of Folklore and Song in the Study of Labor History," and other matters.

In southern California, the West Coast Association of Marxist Historians continues to flourish. Deliberately non-academic in approach, it holds workshops in which Marxist historians of all stripes meet to read and discuss each others' work; study groups; film showings, and special events linked to the politics and protest movements of the area. A recent study group has been conducted on "American Exceptionalism"; and a recent special event was an obituary discussion of the life and work of the distinguished black activist and historian Walter Rodney. W.A.M.H. does not yet have a historical journal of the calibre of M.A.R.H.O.'s *Radical History*. But it has a lively newsletter, complete with book reviews, and news of area events. For copies, write to W.A.M.H. c/o Department of History, UCLA, Los Angeles, Calif. 90024. Readers may be interested to know that the Southern California Group on Labor and Working Class History, which originated the newsletter (then edited by the late Bob Wheeler) out of which I.L.W.C.H. itself developed, has now become formally linked with W.A.M.H. One of the Group's liveliest sessions in recent months was on "Youth and the Left, the 1930s v. the 1960s", with Ben Dobbs, Art Brown, and Dick Flacks, the latter coming down from UC Santa Barbara for the evening event.